SHADE OF HIS *Hand*

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SHADE OF HIS HAND

FOR THE COMFORT OF THE SORROWING

VICTORIA BOOTH DEMAREST

Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
—*Francis Thompson.*

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FOREWORD

In this little book Victoria Booth Demarest, granddaughter of General William Booth and third generation of outstanding women preachers, opens her heart that others who walk in "the valley of the shadow" may share in the grace she found. Here the old, old problem of suffering is pursued by a gifted mind and a reverent heart. The Spartan soul of the Booths suffuses the little volume, but it is a Spartan rigor born of Christian faith, and tenderness, and love.

The mission of the book will be chiefly to those whose hearts have been bowed by the swiftness and weight of grief.

John J. Coulter.

The Parsonage,
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

SORROW is sacred and full of mystery. To approach it superficially is nothing less than a profanation. My own grief in the loss of a beautiful child is my justification for discussing reverently a few of the mysteries connected with suffering, that perhaps I may thus bring some measure of comfort to other wounded hearts. Especially in these days, when the whole world finds itself in a maze of suffering, do men need to see something of good behind the dark clouds of bewildering fear, tragedy, and grief. These pages are an offering of sympathy to everyone in sorrow.

VICTORIA BOOTH DEMAREST.

"Blessed be . . . the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

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Sorrow is like a deep, deep sea,
With waves that toss and moan:
The sky above is dark with fear,
And I am all alone.

The tempest ever wilder grows,
And darker still the night:
Ah, shall my heart no respite know
From sorrow's cruel might?

A whisper comes amid the gloom,
"'Tis I, be not afraid."
If it be thou, my blessed Lord,
Why should I be dismayed?

Ah, bid me come to thee, e'en though
The waters I must tread;
Thou canst subdue beneath my feet
The waves I so much dread.

If but my hand is held in thine
I will not ask to know
The why of wind and stormy wave—
Dost thou not will it so?

All that I ask, O Saviour Friend—
But this must needs be mine—
Is consciousness of thy great love,
Of my hand clasped in thine.

—V. B. D.

"Where shall I meet thee, Lord?
The clamor of the mart
Is beating loud upon my heart—
Can I not find a place apart
Where I may greet thee, Lord?"

"There is a place where I shall be—
Gethsemane!"

"Where shall I meet thee, Lord?
Is there no other place
Less dark, less lonely, full of fear,
Where I may speak and feel thee near,
Worship, and see thy face—
Where I may greet thee, Lord?"

"Welcome, my child, and make thee free
Of mine own place—Gethsemane!"

—*Maude Keane.*

1

SORROW

Sorrow—unpredictable, mysterious, cruel—crashes into our lives, leaving us stunned and bewildered. We slowly recover a sense of reality only to find that we have lost—and it would seem for always—the taste for life, the joy and exhilaration of life, the passion and ambition of life, even perhaps the love of life and the will to live!

What shall we do with this dreadful thing that has come to us—this thing so unexpected, so unwelcome? It dogs us; it will not let us alone; it invades our sleepless hours; it lies, a crushing weight, on our hearts during the days that seem endless. We resent it, we rebel against it, we cry out in our agony—but there seems no relief.

There are two ways of dealing with sorrow. One way is to brood over it; to seek to probe, analyze, and understand it; to nurse it as a treasured though heart-crushing burden. This is the way of weak human flesh, of self-pity, and sometimes of a subtle form of pride, for one is tempted to feel that one loves, suffers, and mourns more deeply than others. It is the way of thoughtlessness, for how often are those who love us

sacrificed to our blind grief! How often do we concentrate love and devotion on the departed, neglecting the living who are dependent upon us for their happiness! It is the way of futility and loss, for it profits nothing; it only destroys, wasting emotion and energy, the most vital forces of life.

The other way of dealing with sorrow is to accept it without bitterness, to consecrate it without question and without understanding to the Man of Sorrows, laying it at his feet as a pitiful but sacred gift, and leaving it there in his keeping forever. This is the way of victory. It is the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, of faith over fear, of hope over despair. It causes joy to grow out of sorrow, strength out of weakness, and life out of death. It brings sunshine instead of shadow, "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Then, even as Samson found honey in the carcass of the lion, we shall find sweetness even in sorrow.

In the choice of one of these ways we decide whether our grief will result in loss or in gain. Sorrow may be either a curse or a blessing, either without use and significance or a treasure of infinite worth. Jealously hidden in the heart, it blights all it touches, causing the loveliest flowers of life to wither and crumble into dust, or it becomes completely worthless and, as the late bishop of Durham wrote in his book, *Christus Consolator*, "The worst evil of all is a wasted sorrow." But when consecrated to God and to humanity, sorrow becomes fruitful for good in one's own life and pregnant with power to bless, heal, comfort, and cheer other lives.

To you who grieve let it be said that your sorrow is

your own. You can keep it if you wish, but if you do so it will eat away your heart. Why not yield your sorrow to God? In every great grief there is an inner shrine that is yours alone; none can enter it but the divine Sufferer himself, and even he cannot do so without your invitation. Dear wounded one, open the door to him and let the quickening breath of his Spirit pass through that secret, lonely, desolate place: let the angel trouble the still, deep waters of sorrow as he did the waters of the Pool of Bethesda, that they may minister healing to you and to others. Do not close your shrinking heart to him—let him in! His presence, though it may not bring the light of understanding, will bring the peace of surrender, and then he will be able to heal the wounds which could not bear the touch of any other hand.

John, chapter 5

Count each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee; do thou
With courtesy receive him; rise and bow;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave;
Then lay before him all thou hast; allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality; no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
The soul's marmoreal calmness. Grief should be
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate,
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end.[1]

[1] By Aubrey de Vere.

And can He, who smiles on all,
Hear the wren, with sorrow small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity on their breast?
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear?

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
Oh no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

He doth give his joy to all;
He becomes an infant small;
He becomes a man of woe;
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

—*William Blake.*

2

THE MAN OF SORROWS

The thought of Christ as the "man of sorrows" holds comfort for those bowed down by grief. Isaiah prophetically speaks of the Suffering One, the lowly Jesus, as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The word "acquainted" is suggestive. Christ knew pain and grief intimately. He did not shun sorrow, he did not ignore or deny it, and yet there was nothing somber, morose, or morbid about our Lord. He also knew the blessing, the sweetness, the enrichment, and the fruitfulness that grief brings when it is not questioned, fought against, or resented, but in simplicity is accepted.

Isaiah 53:3

Consider his sufferings. In the words of Jeremiah, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." The woes of the Lord Jesus were greater than all others—did they not mysteriously embrace all others? How truly have they been called "the unknown sorrows," for no one has fathomed, or ever will fathom the depths of the sufferings of the cross.

Lamentations 1:12

"The gloomy Garden, blood-bedewed,
The midnight scene of shame and scorn,
The scourge, the wreath of rending thorn,
And tortures of the dreadful rood;

"These were the billows of Thy death,
The storm-tossed surface; but the cry,
Thy spirit's woe, *'Sabachthani,'*
Rose from the ocean underneath.

"Man has no line that sea to sound,
The abyss of night—whose gulfs within
Now lies entombed our weight of sin,
Forgotten, never to be found."

I Peter 2:24

Hebrews 4:15

In his pain Christ suffered the pangs of all mankind. The world's burden of sin and sorrow lay heavily on his heart. His sorrows were the sorrows of God, and it is those sorrows that today make him Master of the heart of the world. Because he bore our sins in his own body, he is become humanity's great Saviour. Because he was intimately "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," he is the divine Physician. His tears shed beside an open grave qualify him to be our supreme Comforter. He grieved with Mary of Bethany over the death of Lazarus. He understood the anguish of Mary Magdalene's repentance—the only language of which was her tears and kisses upon his naked feet. He realized the menace of despair which swept Peter, guilty of a great denial, into the night, and it was his look of love and sympathy following and shining upon Peter through the darkness that saved that impetuous disciple from the fate of Judas. He felt the sorrow of the widow of Nain as she followed the body of her only son to the grave—and he restored that son to the bereaved

mother. "In all their affliction he was afflicted"—what comfort is contained in these words! They make us realize that Christ is not a faraway spiritual entity. He is a friend—he enters into our woes and shares our experiences. We hear the words softly whispered, "I understand." We feel

> "Into the darkness creep a gentle hand,
> And through the silence search a loving voice;
> And then a Presence, sweet, pervasive, soft,
> Brooding above the longing and the need."

Isaiah 53:4

But this is not all. Though understanding is the essential qualification of a friend, we need more than understanding. We need help, comfort, healing, relief, and deliverance. Christ, having "borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," having been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and having been "in all points tempted like as we are," not only understands and sympathizes, but "is able to succour them that are tempted" and to give "grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 4:15, 16

Hebrews 2:18

Isaiah 63:9

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days." Christ's ministry meets all our need. In his suffering, death, and resurrection we have the promise of deliverance from all the woes of mankind. From his tears spring our songs; from his wounds comes our healing; from his death streams for us a more abundant life; and from his empty grave comes the promise of our resurrection.

Let us look then to the Man of Sorrows for the binding of our wounds of heart and soul; let us contemplate his cross until this vision accomplishes its purpose in our spiritual comfort and peace.

Our Fellow Sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains,
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, his agonies, and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows has a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.

With boldness, therefore, at the throne
Let us make all our sorrows known,
And ask the aids of heavenly power
To help us in the evil hour.[2]

[2] Michael Bruce.

He is . . . a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.—*Isa.* 53:3-5.

Ah, me! the prison house of pain!—what lessons there
are bought!—
Lessons of a sublimer strain
Than any elsewhere taught;
Amid its loneliness and gloom, grave meanings grow
more clear,
For to no earthly dwelling place seems God so strangely
near![3]

—*Florence Earle Coates.*

[3] Used by permission of The Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities and Mrs. John E. D. Trask.

3

ENRICHMENT OF SORROW

How exacting is sorrow! It makes claim to all we have. We lay costly treasures at its feet—our loves, our emotions, our energies, our very life. It takes all, and seems to give nothing in return. It is a terrible tyrant. But when yielded to God, sorrow, instead of being our master, becomes our servant. Then sorrow gives our priceless offerings back to us purified, perfected, and greatly enhanced. Our loves have become deeper and sweeter, and we have learned the secret of a larger and fuller life. Thus do we experience the words of our Lord: "He that loseth his life . . . shall find it." *Matthew 10:39*

Yes, pain has a great ministry of enrichment. The fiery furnace of sorrow gives us the purer gold of a more generous heart, a broader mind, a higher vision, a stronger character, and a humbler spirit. We come from this furnace enriched with the gifts of tenderness and gentleness, patience and compassion, sympathy and understanding, courage and faith, and a trust that is content to leave unsolved the mysteries of life and death. Considering alone the gift of sympathy: it is when we have suffered that we can best sympathize.

II Corinthians 1:3

"A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." If Christ had not been the "man of sorrows" he could not be the "God of all comfort." When our hearts are broken, we learn how to bind up other broken hearts.

And how needed is the ministry of comfort! This world is full of sorrow—there is scarcely one who does not suffer in some way and at some time—and it is amazing in what varied forms sorrow comes. In sorrow, as in nature, though there is uniformity there is infinite diversity. We see a bride of a few months already mourning her widowhood; a faithful husband betrayed by the wife whom he trusted; a young and beautiful girl suffering from a fatal malady; a woman with an imbecilic child—illustrations might be multiplied *ad infinitum*. It may be that everyone carries in his heart a hidden grief. And what of the tidal wave of tragedy that sweeps over a world shattered by war! Husbands torn from their wives, wives bereft of their husbands, children crying for their parents, parents forced to abandon their children, homes and all means of security swept away, splendid young bodies wounded and maimed, lives breathed out in agony on lonely battlefields! And not one escapes being in some way affected!

Is not the power to be a true helper, a binder of broken hearts, a comforter of the sorrowing, one of the most divine of all enrichments? We may well say with A. E. Hamilton:

"Ask God to give thee skill
In comfort's art,
That thou may'st consecrated be
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy,

For heavy is the weight of ill
In every heart;
And comforters are needed much
Of Christlike touch."

Also, the consideration of our own sorrow in the light of the sorrows of others teaches us humility and gratitude: humility because of the nobility with which some greater sorrows than our own are borne, and gratitude for having been spared sorer affliction.

Then again, sorrow causes us to ponder the many beautiful things in our lives which previously had been taken for granted. I mourn the death of a beautiful boy, but what of the woman who has never had a child to mourn? James Whitcomb Riley exquisitely expressed this thought in the following lines:

"Let me come in where you sit weeping—aye,
Let me, who have not any child to die,
Weep with you for the little one whose love
I have known nothing of.

"The little arms that slowly, slowly loosed
Their pressure round your neck; the hands you used
To kiss. Such arms—such hands I never knew.
May I not weep with you?

"Fain would I be of service—say something,
Between the tears that would be comforting,
But ah! so sadder than yourself am I,
Who have no child to die."[4]

[4] From *Poems Here at Home*, by James Whitcomb Riley. Copyright, 1893, 1921. Used by special permission of The Bobbs-Merrill Company, publishers.

So we find that one of the enrichments of sorrow when rightly accepted is a deeper appreciation of life's remaining blessings and joys.

And we must not fail to mention the enrichment realized in memories—sweet, blessed, purifying, ennobling memories—

"The past is always holy—every heart
Holds something that has grown to be divine;
What haunts there are, where memory walks apart!
Each common place has some invisible shrine."

What is once received can never be lost—it is ours forever. All the sweetness and beauty of the beloved departed, all the grace and noble influence of their lives, these are ours to grow by and to treasure.

And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,
Am I not richer than of old?
Safe in thine immortality.
What change can reach the wealth I hold?
What chance can mar the pearl and gold
Thy love hath left in trust with me?

And while in life's late afternoon,
Where cool and long the shadows grow,
I walk to meet the night that soon
Shall shape and shadow overflow;
I cannot feel that thou art far
Since near at hand the angels are;
And when the sunset gates unbar,
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
And, white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?[5]

—*John Greenleaf Whittier.*

[5] Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

I will commit my way, O Lord, to thee,
Nor doubt thy love, though dark the way may be.
Nor murmur, for the sorrow is from God,
And there is comfort also in thy rod.
I will not seek to know the future years,
Nor cloud today with dark tomorrow's fears;
No—I will ask a light from heav'n to show
How, step by step, my pilgrimage should go.

—*Author Unknown.*

4

FAITH

A great temptation that sometimes assails one stricken by sorrow is that of a deadening fatalism: "What is to be will be, and my much crying and praying cannot alter it." From that thought comes another fraught with terror: "What further disaster awaits me?" "Who will go next?" A paralyzing fear seizes upon the soul, threatening to engulf one's little world in complete darkness.

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." God is not displeased at our grief: He suffers with us, even as Jesus wept with Martha and Mary over the death of their brother. He enters with infinite compassion into the depths of our woe. It is not grief which will bring darkness into our souls, but doubt and fear. *Romans 14:23*

Since God is our heavenly Father, may we not leave the unsolvable mysteries of life and death with him, remembering that "God is love"? All may seem confusion and bewilderment now, but all will one day be made plain. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Faith is not feeling; faith is not sight; faith is not understanding; faith is *I John 4:8* *I Corinthians 13:12*

just faith. No matter how you feel, do not reproach yourself for your feelings. No matter how dark it is, you cannot command the light. No matter how bewildered you are, God does not expect you to understand. No matter—*just believe!* Firmly say with Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Hold on with a breaking heart. Hold on in the darkness. Hold on when your mind will not cease from its groping. Hold on in simple, naked faith. The testing will not last always; the temptation will come to an end, light will break, joy will come out of sorrow, and then how grateful you will be that you remained true!

Job 13:15

Faith means power. Today England is holding her own against the terrific onslaught of a would-be Caesar who, after conquering much of Europe, is flinging his forces against that little island which holds within itself the key to the future of civilization. If England is saved she will have been saved by *faith*. Knowledge, understanding, caution, preparedness—these have their place and importance; but not the Royal Air Force and the Navy combined, nor the Bank of England, could save that queen of nations from destruction should she lose faith. And even in defeat an individual or a nation may rise magnificently triumphant in spirit and greater than ever *because of faith*. "The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

James 1:3, 4

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," but let us not, as so many have done, confuse temptation with sin. One may be sorely tried and tempted, one may cry out in heart agony, one's faith—like a tree bent by the storm—may bow down to the ground, and *still one*

may not be guilty of sin. An experience in the life of Catherine of Siena, that saintly character of the Middle Ages, is illustrative of this truth. She tells of being sorely assailed both night and day for weeks. Terrible thoughts tormented her mind and the most alluring visions of a life of gaiety and sin laid siege to her soul. She fasted and prayed and wept without avail. At last the end of the conflict came. It found her lying exhausted on the marble floor of her little chapel. This conversation with her unseen Lord then followed:

"Where wert thou, Lord, when I was so fiercely assailed?"
"I was in thine heart, Catherine."
"How couldst thou be in my heart, dear Lord, when it was filled with such thoughts and feelings?"
"Did those thoughts and feelings afford thee any pleasure, Catherine?"
"Oh, my Lord, thou knowest they caused me the keenest anguish."
"That was because I was in thine heart, Catherine."

She had been tempted but she had not sinned.

However, should we have sinned, should we under the pressure of grief have doubted, despaired, even cursed God, he loves us still! When Peter had denied his Lord three times, the look of Jesus broke his heart because it was a look of love. Christ is our "advocate with the Father": and who can better plead our case than the "man of sorrows," who is himself "acquainted with grief"? "If we confess our sins," the Apostle John tells us, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we are

Luke 22:61, 62
I John 2:1
Isaiah 53:3
I John 1:9

faithless, he is faithful. All he asks is sincere and heartfelt repentance. God would not be "faithful" or "just" if he did not forgive—since Christ died for us.

I John 3:20

Also, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." He makes allowances for us even when we have ceased to make them for ourselves; he loves us when we hate ourselves; he forgives us when we are loath to forgive ourselves. Sometimes we are harder on ourselves than need be, even more severe in judging ourselves than is God, for "God is love," and love means perfect understanding and never-failing sympathy. Let us not grieve him by continuing to doubt. Let us not allow pride to creep up under the guise of a false humility and whisper, "You have sinned too much." Let us receive our forgiveness at his hands with the simplicity and faith of a little child. And let us never brood over the past. Brooding over the past is like unburying the dead. In the spiritual realm, even as in the natural, this only spreads death. The words of the Lord Jesus to the young man who hesitated to follow him because of his unburied father seem harsh, but contain an exceedingly wholesome and life-giving truth: "Follow me. . . . Let the dead bury their dead." This is faith! Let us then like the Apostle Paul press on, "forgetting those things which are behind"; yes, press on, with our eyes ever looking toward the sunrise of God's eternal day.

Luke 9:59, 60

Philippians 3:13

And thus, by ways not understood,
Out of each dark vicissitude,
God brings us compensating good.

For faith is perfected by fears,
And souls renew their youth with years,
And love looks into heav'n through tears.[6]

—*Phoebe Cary.*

[6] From "Compensation," by Phoebe Cary. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers.

I asked for bread; God gave a stone instead.
Yet, while I pillowed there my weary head,
The angels made a ladder of my dreams,
Which upward to celestial mountains led.
And when I woke beneath the morning's beams,
Around my resting place fresh manna lay;
And, praising God, I went upon my way,
For I was fed.

God answers prayer; sometimes, when hearts are weak,
He gives the very gifts believers seek.
But often faith must learn a deeper rest,
And trust God's silence when he does not speak;
For he whose name is Love will send the best.
Stars may burn out, nor mountain walls endure,
But God is true, his promises are sure
For those who seek.[7]

—*Myra Goodwin Plantz.*

[7] From *Songs for Quiet Hours*, by Myra Goodwin Plantz. Copyright, 1915. Used by permission of Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, publishers.

5

UNANSWERED PRAYER

There is no more heart-crushing experience than that of unanswered prayer. Suffering can be patiently borne when we are comforted by evidences of God's love and care. But when these are seemingly denied us—ah, then!

For those who have been thus tested, the story of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, as told in the eleventh chapter of John's Gospel, contains a wealth of spiritual comfort.

"Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard . . . that he [Lazarus] was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." This is an unmistakable case of unanswered prayer. With what carefulness those sisters had worded their message to Jesus: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." And with what faith and renewed hope and courage had they looked for his immediate response! So well did they know his love for them that they considered a statement of their need sufficient to cause him to hasten immediately to their aid. But hours of anguish dragged slowly by as one sister watched by the bedside of him who was not only

brother but also protector, guardian, and friend, and the other stationed herself at the window, hoping, longing, looking, for the desperately needed Master whose presence would mean the turning of their sorrow into joy. Surely he would come—he would not disappoint them! But Jesus did not come! Lazarus grew steadily worse. And Lazarus died. Why did the Master stay away?

Love is sometimes manifested in refusal. It is very significant that the statement that Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, should be immediately followed with the record that when he heard of the illness of Lazarus he abode two days longer in the place where he was. His staying away is thus shown to have been directly connected with his love for them. Yes, it was *because* he loved them that he did not respond to their appeal. Our Lord manifested what to us is amazing self-control and self-denial in staying away. Had he loved himself a little more and them a little less, how quickly he would have hastened to their side! He had for them a better plan. Yes, the purest and deepest love may sometimes be evidenced in refusal.

He knows. In the fourteenth verse of this chapter we read that at the end of the two days Jesus said to his disciples, "Lazarus is dead." The moment Lazarus died Jesus knew it. Evidently he had been keenly aware of the progress of the malady; he must then also have been aware of the deep anguish of the sisters, of the terrible conflict that was raging in their souls, of their every dark doubt and fear, and of every thought of despair and of terror that took possession of their hearts during those awful hours. He knew it all!

When our Lord fails to answer our prayers let us

nevertheless remember that he has heard them; he is not deaf to our cry; he is keenly conscious of our need; he is intimately acquainted with our every thought and feeling; *he knows all.* And yet, knowing all, he may still refuse us; he may refuse us *just because he does know all.*

He suffered with them. If Martha, Mary, and Lazarus suffered, Jesus also suffered. It may be that he suffered more. The extent of his suffering is revealed in those two eloquent words, "Jesus wept." He wept, although he knew that he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He had known it all along. Jesus never minimized the tragedy of death. Even though he conquered death, he respected its dark power. His tears were eloquent of the silence, terror, and awfulness of the grave, and they were eloquent of his sympathy for the bereaved. They evidenced that he had shared every pang, every heartbreak, every disappointment of his friends.

At different times and without the other's knowledge, each sister had expressed to him in the same words the bitterness of her woe: "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Evidently this thought had been the apex of the sisters' anguish and had obsessed their minds. The repetition of this undeserved rebuke, by those whom he so dearly loved, stabbed our Lord to the heart! Martha's and Mary's anguish found expression in words, but our Lord's—now intensified by their misunderstanding—was manifested only in tears: "Jesus wept."

He suffers with us—may this thought bring comfort to our hearts. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "We have not an high priest which can-

Hebrews 4:15

not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Are we not the members of his body? Is he not our "Head" and is not pain in any member of the body felt first and most in the head?

I Corinthians, chapter 12

No suffering may be our lot to which our Lord is a stranger. We say this reverently—Jesus himself knew the agony of unanswered prayer. Did he not pray with "strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death"? Did he not ask repeatedly in the Garden of Gethsemane that the bitter cup of his coming Passion be removed from him? Three times he prayed, and such was the agony of his supplication that great drops of blood fell from his brow. But, if we were to be saved, that cup could not be removed. Jesus accepted his Father's refusal, and because his Father's will was his will, and because he loved us to the end, he took the cup! "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Hebrews 5:7

John 18:11

Our Lord also knew what it was to be abandoned of God in the hour of his direst need. During Golgotha's awful suffering, when nailed to the cross of death, he was heard to cry in bitterest anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Such depth of woe is beyond man to fathom, but in some mysterious way it was necessary if our redemption was to be consummated.

Matthew 27:46

When it seems that God does not hear, that he does not care, that he has left us alone in the awfulness of grief, may we remember the Garden of Gethsemane and also the darkness and bitter loneliness of Calvary. That suffering, that abandonment, that death, was the fount of humanity's greatest happiness.

Blessings come to others because of unanswered

prayer. "Then said Jesus unto them [his disciples] plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." As we have already noted, so intensely did our Lord suffer over his friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, that he wept—and we know that Jesus did not weep lightly. Only twice do we read of his tears: once over the sins of a city, Jerusalem, and once over the death of a friend, Lazarus. This shows how deep must have been his anguish for his friends. He wept, and yet he had said to his disciples, "I am glad for your sakes." In other words, he himself was willing to suffer, and, what is even nobler, he was willing to have his friends, Mary and Martha, suffer, for the sake of the larger good that would come to his disciples, for the sake of the multitude of followers that he foresaw—for your sake and mine. We owe the resurrection of Lazarus, that transcendent miracle in the life of our Lord, to his suffering and to the suffering of Mary and Martha. Those sisters had no conception of what a harvest of blessing would come from their soul agony, a harvest of blessing reaching out to the ends of the earth, even throughout eternity. Nor do we know what our sufferings born of unanswered prayer may bring forth in blessing to others. How the martyrs must have prayed for deliverance—but their blood became the seed of the Church! Shall we not trust Him who knows "the end from the beginning"?

He sometimes refuses us because he has something better in store for us. Had Jesus answered the prayer of Mary and Martha, had he hastened to their home and healed Lazarus, they would never have witnessed the amazing miracle of their brother's resurrection. In this miracle did not our Lord give them a supreme evidence

of his love and power? Did it not strengthen their faith infinitely more than the healing of Lazarus would have done? We are reminded of the three Hebrew young men who flung defiance at Nebuchadnezzar in the following words of unparalleled heroism: "Our God . . . is able to deliver us . . . , and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee . . . that we will not serve thy gods." "He will deliver us"—but he did not deliver them. What must have been the feeling of those young men as they were bound hand and foot, dragged, and finally flung into the fiery furnace? God did not deliver them—he walked with them *in* the fiery furnace; and when they came forth from the midst of the flames, we read, there was not even the smell of fire on their garments! Had their prayer for deliverance been answered those young men would have missed an unparalleled spiritual experience of triumph and joy.

Daniel 3:17, 18

It sometimes seems impossible for us to believe that God can do better for us than to grant our heart's desire, but that he *can* has been illustrated in countless lives.

Jesus showed the right attitude toward unanswered prayer. When our Lord was facing Calvary he uttered these significant words: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. *Father, glorify thy name.*" "What shall I say?" exclaimed our Lord when the awful vision of his coming crucifixion rose before him. "Shall I ask to be delivered from the cross? Shall I ask for the modifying of my sufferings or for the assistance of angels in my fierce conflict? What shall I say?" And he answered his own question with the

John 12:27, 28

words, "Father, glorify thy name." These words manifest perfect love, perfect trust, perfect abandon to his Father's will, born of the supreme passion of his heart, namely, that God be glorified.

This passion for the glory of God should dominate every true Christian heart. God knows best how to glorify his name, whether through joy or sorrow, whether through granting or denying our petitions. If our many prayers are absorbed into this greater prayer of our Lord's, "Father, glorify thy name," even as the light of the stars melts into that of the rising sun, we shall find in the end that—after all—our prayers have been answered in the fullest sense.

O you
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so named, who guards above
  Its end, and shall fulfill!
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts away
  In his broad, loving will.[8]

[8] Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

You were a workingman, my Lord—
A workingman like me:
Your life in toil and sweat was poured,
Your strength was good to see.

Oft while your body ached at night
With heav'n your soul would plead:
You prayed until the day's new light
Brought clamor of man's need.

For you no shame in bended back,
In hands both rough and soiled!
That man, your friend, might feel no lack,
My Lord, you toiled and toiled.

To catch his fish John needs a boat,
The child must have his bed—
From dewy morn the hammer smote
Till western skies grew red.

They seemed to be a part of you—
The beam, the piercing nail—
They seemed to say, in accents true,
Man's need you'd never fail!

You were a workingman, my Lord—
A workingman like me!
On cross of wood your strength was poured
In blood—on Calvary.

—V. B. D.

6

WORK

Shortly after the death of his wife, Catherine, General William Booth, in a letter of condolence addressed to one of his Salvation Army officers, wrote: "Two words will signify the chief source of your consolation in the future: one will be *faith*, and the other *work*. What those words signify has been my help, indeed has saved me from desolation, if not actual despair."

Work is one of God's greatest benefactions to man. There is a thrill in the mere using of all our powers and faculties to the full. Add to this the satisfaction of accomplishment, and, best of all, the knowledge of having made our contribution, however modest, to the well-being of others, and we have the secret of true happiness. To work, and to work well, makes us God-like, for God works. Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God is always working, and all nature works. When we fall out of the workers' ranks and lay down our tools, we fall out of harmony with God and with his universe, and we open wide the door to physical and moral disintegration. On one occasion my little girl, aged nine at the time, had neglected her homework. I told her there was one sin of which the

Devil was not guilty. She was startled and wonderingly asked what that could be. "Laziness," was the answer.

Work is a great antidote for sorrow. It provides a wholesome diversion from ever-threatening, sad reflections, a normal outlet for emotions and energies that would otherwise be wasted in futile grieving and in morbid retrospection. In ministering—in caring for those about us whose happiness largely depends on us—we are helped to forget our own sorrows: our tears, mingled with the tears of others, lose some of their bitterness; bearing another's burden lightens the weight of our own; the joys of others, especially the joys we have helped to create, cause us to recapture somewhat of the glow of past happiness; and we also experience a divine joy, which may be ours even in the midst of pain—the joy of having done the will of God.

Then again, work is a great blessing in that it helps us to "carry on." There is no place for the quitter in the serious business of life. Everyone is needed to fill his place and to do his part. So much easier is it for us to bear our sorrow when we are conscious of not having failed those who look to us for courage and cheer, yes, perhaps those who look to us for even the necessities of life. Duty well done is a balm for the wounded heart and carries its own reward. Life calls for heroes, not for cowards. And when we would plead weakness or sorrow as an alibi, we hear God say to us, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." His grace *is* sufficient for our deepest need and what we could *never* do in our own strength becomes easy of accomplishment when, "By his Spirit in the inner man," we are daily "strengthened

II Corinthians 12:9

Ephesians 3:16
Colossians 1:11

with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

On the sundial which adorned his garden, Thomas Carlyle had the words inscribed: "Work . . . while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Bereavement ever reminds us of the swift passing of time with its priceless and never-recurring opportunities. "The night cometh"! We should not fear that night which introduces us to a brighter and fairer day: what we *should* fear is that it may overtake us when as yet our appointed task is unfinished. Heaven will be made doubly sweet if we are worthy to hear the words of our Master: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." *Matthew 25:21*

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
  Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
  Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe![9]

[9] Robert Browning.

Sorrow marries us to God.
—*Dante.*

7

OUR PERFECTING

How mysterious is the human soul! A Russian writer compares it to a dark and impenetrable forest. Little do we know or understand our own souls, much less the souls of others. One of the perplexing mysteries of life is that pain—heart-breaking, soul-crushing pain, pain that man so dreads and hates—seems essential to his highest spiritual development. Strange and yet true that pain may be man's friend, even to him one of God's messengers of love!

On the outside of a Denver hospital these words are written:

"The cry of man's anguish went up unto God,
'Lord, take away pain!
The shadow that darkens the world thou hast made;
The close-coiling chain
That strangles the heart; the burden that weighs
On the wings that would soar—
Lord, take away pain from the world thou hast made,
That it love thee the more!'

"Then answered the Lord to the cry of his world:
'Shall I take away pain,

And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,
And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love, that redeems with a price,
And smiles at its loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would climb unto mine
The Christ on his cross?' "

All that is worth while has come to us through pain. While in prison, from the depths of his shame and humiliation, Oscar Wilde wrote: "Out of sorrow have the worlds been built and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain."[10] Pain either makes or breaks, depending on the individual; it either kills or brings to life. When accepted as a mysterious gift at the hand of God who is love, pain becomes soul-purging, a cleansing fire; it awakens our sleeping souls, tears the scales from our spiritual eyes, stirs us to action, draws us out of ourselves and toward God—from the finite to the Infinite, from the seen to the Unseen—casting us in helplessness on the bosom of eternal Love.

Again we quote Oscar Wilde, who deeply sinned and who deeply suffered: "Now it seems to me that love of some kind is the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering there is in the world. . . . I am convinced that there is no other, and if the world has indeed, as I have said, been built of sorrow, it has been built by the hands of love, because in no

[10] From *De Profundis*, by Oscar Wilde. Used by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers, and Vyoyan Beresford Holland, owner of the copyright.

other way could the soul of man for whom the world was made reach the full stature of its perfection."[11] An individual, and even a nation, may find its soul through pain. In a letter addressed by Madame Chiang Kai-shek to a college friend in the United States, this remarkable wife of the brave Chinese general, writes: "We have great faith that, in the end, good will come to us. Perhaps all the suffering is for an inscrutable reason, and I feel our country will find its soul."

To be convinced that the God-intended purpose of pain is indeed the soul's awakening, development, and perfecting, we have only to watch pain at work in the life of Job, of David, of Adoniram Judson, of ancient and modern saints. Jeanne Marie de la Motte Guyon, in 1695 sent to prison for eight years because of her religious convictions, whose life might be termed a romance of sorrow, wrote:

"By Thy command, where'er I stray
Sorrow attends me all my way,
A never-failing friend;
But if my suffering may augment
Thy praise, behold me well content,
Let sorrow still attend!

"Sorrow and love go side by side;
Nor height nor depth can e'er divide
Their heaven-appointed bands;
Those dear associates still are one,
Nor, till the race of life is run,
Disjoin their wedded hands."

Subtle temptations sometimes beckon those who are weary of deep suffering: the temporary bliss of com-

[11] *Ibid.*

plete forgetfulness promised by excitement and pleasure, the emotional release consequent upon passionate rebellion, or the indulgence of plunging into the depths of a dark and hopeless bitterness. However, these ways of seeking surcease from intolerable anguish of heart and soul are only a cruel mockery. Far greater than the suffering caused by our human losses, disappointments, and heartbreaks, is that of a soul at war with God, with itself, and with life! Compared with this, even bereavement is sweet pain! There is no redeeming feature in the violent reactions that follow sinful pleasure, in the frightful convulsions of a rebellious soul, or in the deadly silence of bitterness and despair. And yet even these experiences may finally serve to bring us to God in deeper humility, thus ministering to the healing of our souls. Francis Thompson had this in mind when, in "The Hound of Heaven," he wrote:

"Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am he whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest me.' "[12]

Yes, God has many ways of finding our souls through pain. After the first stunning bewilderment of a great sorrow is past, we become conscious of many things before unperceived. Our undisciplined natures, passionate wills, uncontrolled emotions, and sinful doubts are revealed in the white light of God. Then we realize that there is justice in his decrees and bend

[12] From "The Hound of Heaven," by Francis Thompson. Used by permission of Burns, Oates & Washbourne, publishers.

beneath the hand that has smitten us. Again with Madame Guyon, we say:

"Thou hast no lightnings, O thou just!
Or I their force should know;
And if thou strike me into dust,
My soul approves the blow.

"Smite me, O thou whom I provoke!
And I will love thee still.
The well-deserved and righteous stroke
Shall please me, though it kill."

As the falling of the rain and the plowing of the ground cause the earth to bring forth, so may our tears and heartbreaks result in a rich harvest of good. "Our light affliction," writes the Apostle Paul, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

II Corinthians 4:17, 18

No affliction at first seems "light." As the writer of The Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" and in the life to come an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Hebrews 12:11

"Thank God for pain!
No tear hath ever yet been shed in vain,
And in the end each sorrowing heart shall find
No curse, but blessings in the hand of pain;
Even when he smiteth, then is God's most kind.
Thank God for pain!"

In "pastures green"? Not always; sometimes he
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be,
Out of the sunshine, warm and soft and bright,
Out of the sunshine into darkest night.
I oft would faint with sorrow and affright,
Only for this, I know he holds my hand;
So whether led in green or desert land,
I trust although I may not understand.

And by "still waters"? No, not always so;
Ofttimes the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.
But when the storms beat loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by,
And whispers to my soul, "Lo, it is I."
Above the tempest wild I hear him say,
"Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day:
In every path of thine I lead the way."

So, whether on the hilltops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where
The shadows lie, what matter? He is there.
And more than this: where'er the pathways lead,
He gives to me no helpless broken reed,
But his own hand, sufficient for my need.

—*Attributed to Henry H. Barry.*

8

THE WILL OF GOD

A child—death! A lovely, happy, healthy child, full of sweetness, laughter, and love, offering so many golden promises for the future—death, grim, cold, terrible, cruel! This is only one of the many ways in which a soul may be faced with the problem of the ages—the problem of the will of God.

In connection with sorrow, suffering, and bereavement, the thought of the will of God raises bewildering questions. How is the divine will to be reconciled with unavoidable factors in the natural world, such as the law of cause and effect, of antecedent and consequent, or with the contingencies of war and accident?

And in the spiritual world certain factors also demand to be taken into account, namely, the law of penalty and the law of the innocent suffering for the guilty. These certainly seem upon first consideration to be in conflict with what we would esteem to be the will of God—granted that he is Love and full of compassion.

The problems here intimated are as vast and infinite as God himself. They are incapable of human solution. And yet a frank consideration may help us to a clearer understanding.

In the natural world the law of cause and effect controls the diseases and the calamities to which mankind is subject, and some reasonably argue that God created this law, and that, like himself, it is no respecter of persons. The beneficial rain falls and the sun shines on the unjust as well as on the just, and storms, cyclones, fires, floods, and epidemics sweep away the good with the evil. Some might ask why we should expect God to interfere with the outworking of his own laws. Especially do those feel this very strongly who realize that through their folly, carelessness, ignorance, or neglect, they have broken one or more of God's natural laws and have thus brought sorrow upon their own heads. The argument seems sensible, and yet we are conscious that it contains the seed of a dangerous fatalism, and is difficult to reconcile with our faith in God as a loving Father who overrules the life of his children and holds the world in his hands.

Matthew 5:45

For light, let us turn our thoughts to Christ, who in all things is "the express image" of the Father, the perfect revelation of his heart and mind. There is nothing fatalistic about Jesus—we see him spending his life in turning evil to good. *Irrespective of their merits,* he restores sight to the blind; makes the lame to walk and the dumb to speak; dries the widow's tears by restoring her only son to life; gives Lazarus back to his bereaved sisters. We see him as the Lord of the insensate world, stilling the storm, walking on the waves, multiplying the bread, and at the last laying aside the garments of death and stepping triumphantly from the grave. Here is One who did not break the laws of nature but who was *greater than nature,* who brought into operation laws superior to its own. His

Hebrews 1:3

whole life was a demonstration of the fact that God's will for us is our *physical and spiritual welfare and consequent happiness*, and that he can overrule all forces to that end. Christ has not changed in love, power, or purpose; his will for us is still our happiness. He is able and willing to overrule all laws and events for our physical or spiritual good.

Real faith rests on the fact of his love for us, and of his great compassion, and on the knowledge that he who is the Creator is greater than his creation and abundantly able to deliver us from our sufferings, whether they be physical or spiritual, if in his wisdom he finds it best.

Doubtless it is impossible to be dogmatic concerning the outworking of the divine will. There are and always will be mysteries connected with God's dealings with men. We see beautiful souls who suffer much and deeply. Job, the righteous man, endured extraordinary suffering, but how richly has the record of his experience ministered to humanity! Our Lord himself "learned obedience" and was made perfect *by those things which he suffered*. Also, we should remember that there is no universal rule to which God has made himself subject. There is no regimentation of men in his policy. He deals with us as with individuals possessing differing personalities. Again quoting Oscar Wilde in *De Profundis*: "Christ had no patience with the dull, lifeless, mechanical systems that treat people as if they were things, and so treat everybody alike—as if anybody, or anything, for that matter, was like aught else in the world." No, God has not bound himself by any set of rules, nor does he subject his actions to the

Hebrews 5:8

Hebrews 2:10

Isaiah 55:8

judgment or approval of men. He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways."

Matthew 13:58

There also remains a possibility that we may prevent his direct action in our lives through unbelief. We have the record that Christ could not work miracles in a certain city because of the unbelief of its people. Faith was the necessary condition to his intervention. Again and again do we hear him say to those whom he healed, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Today, even as in the days of his flesh, many are witnessing to the reality of the healing of their bodies and to remarkable deliverances because they have *dared to believe*. No one has yet fathomed the depth of this saying of Christ's: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Mark 9:23

Psalm 9:17

As to war and its resultant anguish and suffering, we read the solemn word: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Spiritual indifference and lethargy allow the powers of darkness to wax stronger, with terrible results to the innocent and the godly. Nations, as well as individuals, need at times to pass through the fiery furnace of suffering that they may be purified and reborn.

Matthew 10:29, 30

Concerning accident, there is a word of our Lord's which brings peace to the heart: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Jesus does not say, "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father willeth it." The meaning here is, "Without your Father's knowing it." He knows. He is lovingly concerned in all that touches us, for are we not "of more value than many sparrows"?

I dare not go farther than this except to say that we too know something: "We know that all things work together for good to them [nations and individuals] that love God." "All things"—even if Satan has been the agent, as in the case of Job. God permitted him to touch Job—Satan could not have done so otherwise, for Job was in God's hands—but in the experience of Job we see it illustrated that God can and does overrule even Satan's works to our good, for "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." All things "work together"—combine to serve us in some mysterious way—even as the wind and the rain and sunshine work together to bring the rose to perfection. "For good"—the ultimate purpose of God is always good; the will of God is "good, and acceptable, and perfect." As Frederick W. Faber so beautifully puts it,

Romans 8:28

Job 42:12

Romans 12:2

> "Ill that he blesses is our good,
> And unblest good is ill;
> And all is right that seems most wrong,
> If it be his sweet will."

"To them that love God"—if we rebel against him, if we doubt him or turn away from him, all things will not work together for our good, but rather for our destruction. The same storm that brings the lily to perfection may shatter the oak, because the oak resists whereas the lily yields. If we yield our souls to the spiritual storm, the rain and the wind of God will all minister to our moral freshening and beautifying.

As to penalty—in the spiritual world it is the outworking of the same law of cause and effect as is evi-

dent in the natural realm. The breaking of law, whether natural or spiritual, brings its own punishment. Disobedience to natural law causes physical suffering, and disobedience to spiritual law, which disobedience is sin, often causes both physical and spiritual suffering. However, here also the love of God may—if we will allow it to do so—overrule suffering to our good. This is clearly shown in the life of David. When accused by the Prophet Nathan of his terrible crime against Uriah, David tore his garments and with deepest anguish exclaimed, "I have sinned." Nathan immediately replied, "The Lord also hath put away [forgiven] thy sin"; but he added, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

II Samuel 12:13

God always forgives when we truly repent. Let this be emphatically affirmed, but *his forgiveness does not always involve absence of punishment.* David mourned and fasted and lay on the ground seven days, for, as he said, "Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?" But the child died. When David knew that the child was dead, he arose from the earth, washed and anointed himself, changed his apparel, and went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. These actions and his words, "I shall go to him," were conclusive evidence that he knew himself to be forgiven. But they were also a noble admission of *God's righteousness in punishing him.* When we know that afflictions have come upon us through our own wrongdoing, rebellion only increases our sufferings. Let us prove our love for God by bowing to his will and by trusting his justice.

II Samuel 12:22

David's child suffered and died because of David's sin. This suggests the last problem mentioned: *that of the suffering of the innocent for the guilty.* This law, for it also is a law, expressed in the words, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," has caused thousands to question God's love and justice. But has it occurred to these perplexed ones that although we are faced in all our hospitals and asylums with the seemingly cruel outworkings of that law, there are unnumbered multitudes who, by the remembrance of that law, have refrained from sin? Many a man who will not shy away from evil because of consequences which may accrue to himself will reconsider when he remembers how those whom he loves may be affected by his acts. After all, the great majority of human beings have not sunk to the level of the beast but still retain enough of the divine image to care more for their loved ones than they do for themselves.

Exodus 20:5

The suffering of the innocent for the guilty is tragically manifest in inheritance. But it is comforting to know that, even as the Creator is greater than the created, so is God greater than the law of heredity. He can and often does overrule its effects. We have known of many children who have been saved by divine grace from suffering either the physical or the spiritual consequences of their parents' sins.

Again, we should not forget that this law of heredity works in two ways. If the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, so also are the blessings. And while there is a time limit to the visitation of the fathers' sins in the words, "Unto the . . . fourth generation," there is none in the visitation of the blessings: they are "unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my

commandments." If the innocent suffer for the guilty, *the innocent also greatly benefit through the godly.*

I Thessalonians 4:3

The will of God in connection with suffering involves a vast field of thought of which we have here touched only the border, but there is one thing concerning his will which we can know with absolute certainty. We are told that "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." If our sanctification, which means our perfecting, is the will of God, surely he knows best how to bring this about. We must leave the means employed to him. The will of a good honest doctor is that his patients may be perfectly well, but he may use very different means to that end, according to the requirements of each case: to one he may recommend a change to a beautiful country with a healthful and invigorating climate; to another, the surgeon's knife; to still another, a bitter medicine; but in every case his ultimate object is the same—the health and happiness of his patient. Our Lord is called the Great Physician. We know that he is good, true, and faithful. Shall we not trust ourselves to him?

"Thy will be done." Why always bow the head
In anguish when these sacred words are said?
More light than darkness falleth from above;
The will of God shows clearest through his love.

Why should we kneel in fear, as God were foe,
When unto him we pray, "Thy will be done"?
Why learn to "bend and kiss the rod" in woe?
On just and unjust shines his blessed sun.

"Thy will be done." Is there no other way
Than crying out of sorrow, thus to pray?
God's daily gifts outweigh the heaviest loss;
The crown is ours as surely as the cross.

If aught we know, we know that joy reigns there;
Then let us, as we pray the Christ-taught prayer,
Lift up our hearts in joy at blessings given:
"Thy will be done on earth, as 'tis in heaven."[13]

—*Louise Peabody Sargent.*

[13] From 1000 *Quotable Poems*. Used by permission of Willett, Clark & Company, publishers.

There is a love that dying does not die;
There is a love that grieving does not sigh;
True child of heav'n, it quietly awaits
The flinging wide of earthly prison gates!

There is a love, though torn and crimson stained
(Through loving much it was so cruelly pained),
That still loves on, and bravely hopes and smiles,
And softly kneels to pray in secret aisles.

There is a love that does not know defeat,
That will not bow the head nor call retreat!
It shines alone, in silence grave and calm,
And, with the stars at night, it sings a psalm.

—*V. B. D.*

9

LOVE

Love! Who can encompass or fathom it? Who can compute its value or measure its greatness? This is despite the saying of the little Russian boy: "Dear mother, I am sure that I love you twice as much as you love me." "Why, little one?" "Because you have two sons and I have only one mother."

If comparisons are often impossible, they are certainly so in the matter of love, for love is love, whether one loves mother, husband, child, wife, or friend. Love, being of the same nature as God, since "God is love," is beyond all human appraisal. In the human heart it is a little of the Infinite comprehended within the finite. Love is life. We only live when we love and where we love: take away love, and life is stripped of all its color, beauty, and worth.

I John 4:8

Why, then, is it that God so often smites us in our affections, in the very center of our beings, where we live most, where we are most sensitive and tender? May it not be because we are so prone to be enslaved by whatever or whomever we love—and *because all enslavement is destructive to the soul's health and happiness*? As the writer's father suggests:

"Our souls are held by all they hold;
Slaves still are slaves in chains of gold;
To whatsoever we may cling,
We make it a soul-chaining thing;
Whether it be a life or land,
And dear as our right eye or hand."[14]

Poor, passionate hearts of ours! They *will* cling, notwithstanding all our vows. We need divine help in our loving perhaps more than in anything else. It is right for us to love and to love deeply. We were created for love. But our loves easily become selfish and tenacious, sometimes even idolatrous, and it is the purifying of these passions that God, in his great love for us, is seeking to effect. Sometimes this cannot be done except through sorrow, heartbreak, or bereavement.

After the death of my first child (not the one whose loss caused the writing of this book), when lonely and sad upon a hospital bed, I penned the following:

When fingers cling they sorrow bring
  Upon the loving heart:
Crown Jesus king in everything—
  From all thine idols part.

He whispers low to let them go,
  Love's idols I have known:
How sweet to know he loves me so—
  He wants me all his own.

Yes, for our own sakes God desires the first place in our affections—that first place which is rightly his. Even legitimate affections, if tenaciously, selfishly, and

[14] By Arthur Sydney Booth-Clibborn.

passionately nursed, may become the enemies of our souls and of the souls of others—saddest of all, *the enemies of the very objects of these affections.* Thus does love become the enemy of love itself. Selfish, narrow, and exclusive love blinds us to the needs and rights of others—even to the needs of the chosen objects of love: it makes us thoughtless and sometimes unconsciously unkind. There are mothers who claim to love their children, but who really love themselves in their children; whose love is adulterated by pride; who neglect their children's spiritual welfare. There are husbands who profess devotion to their wives but ignore the latters' rights and selfishly impose on their kindness. There are tyrannical wives, presumably adoring their husbands, who nevertheless enslave them to their every whim. Natural affection, if it is to be purged from dross, *must be laid upon the altar of divine love.* Often it must suffer denial, experience cruel doubts and fears, be severely disciplined and even crucified, before it is cleansed of selfish passion to become genuine love—a composite of pure devotion, self-surrender, and unswerving loyalty.

True love is unselfish. It is not given to flattery. Always clear-eyed, it helps another to overcome his faults while rejoicing in his virtues. It is intelligent, dependable, and enduring. To love thus rightly and well is the greatest science of life—it is life itself.

We should apply ourselves to the practice of true love; we should love openhandedly, unreservedly, and purely, and pray to love with the greatest unselfishness and wisdom those whom we love the most, remembering always that the sweetest love that blesses our lives

is not our own: it is lent us by God, and, if it be abused, it may easily be lost to us.

It is given us mortals to shed about us a radiance brighter than that of the sunshine—the radiance of love which gladdens, warms, and beautifies all life. Let us give love—true love—and love will come back to us a hundredfold.

O love while still you can!
O love while still you may!
The day will come when you
Will stand and mourn and weep
Beside an open grave.
See that your heart e'er glows,
And nurse and cherish love,
While beats another heart
In warm response to yours.
And him who loves you not
Do what you can to win;
Fill all his days with joy
And never cause him grief.
And watch your tongue with care:
How quick hard words are said!
"O God, they were not meant!"
But others go and weep.[15]

Also, love is always a costly thing. It asks much and we dare not refuse. Capacity for love determines capacity for pain. And the capacity for love of the most tender human heart compared to that of the heart of the Eternal is like the capacity of a cup in contrast with that of the ocean bed. God *is* love; his nature is love; the whole universe is a creation of his love and

[15] Freely translated from the German, "*O Lieb*," F. Freiligrath, by V. B. D.

is bathed in the ocean of that love. Our loves are, so to speak, but the spillings of divine love. If our capacity for love determines our capacity for sorrow, what must the divine sorrows have been in the giving of God's Son for our salvation?

"God so loved . . . that he gave." The greatness of his love is measured by the greatness of his gift: his only Son who was "in the bosom of the Father" before the foundation of the world, who was like the sun in splendor, like the dawn in glory, like the lily in purity, and like a lamb in gentleness. And that Son said, "I and my Father are one." When God gave his Son he *gave himself!* "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." In giving Christ, God presented his heart—and it was a heart of love, even to his enemies.

John 3:16

John 1:18

This then permits the question: If God thus loved us, would he arbitrarily send suffering upon us? If it cost him so much to give his own Son, and he gave him for me, would it be likely that unfeelingly he would take my child? No! No! If he loved us enough to give his Son, *then God's dealings with us must be the dealings of love, and the sorrows as well as the joys of our lives are the gifts of that love.*

O blessed Well of Love! O Flower of Grace!
O glorious Morning Star! O Lamp of Light!
Most lively image of thy Father's face,
Eternal King of Glory, Lord of Might,
Meek Lamb of God, before all worlds behight [ordained].
How can we thee requite for all this good?
Or what can prize [equal in value] that, thy most precious blood?[16]

[16] Edmund Spenser.

Think you to escape
What mortal man can never be without?
What saint upon earth has ever lived apart from cross and care?
Why, even Jesus Christ, our Lord, was not even for one hour free from his Passion's pain!
Christ said he needs must suffer,
Rising from the dead,
And enter thus upon his glory.
And how do you ask for another road
Than this—the royal pathway of the holy cross?

—*Thomas à Kempis.*

10

SACRIFICE

In our loves, as in everything else, we cannot serve two masters. It is a rule of life that the lesser must be surrendered to the greater. Voluntary or involuntary sacrifice is always involved in a life of service, and the sacrifice of the entirely legitimate for the sake of a cause or a principle has resulted in greater or lesser sorrow to thousands of noble souls. David Livingstone, the heroic missionary explorer, buried his dearly beloved wife in the wilds of Africa. Adoniram Judson, before he had been fourteen years in Burma, buried there his wife and both his children. Unnumbered multitudes, because of their devotion to Christ and their faithfulness to the inner voice, have made sacrifices which have caused suffering to themselves and to their loved ones.

Sacrifice is not confined to Christianity: The development of all arts and sciences has been at the price of sacrifice. Every cause has its martyrs. How much the nation of which we are a part owes to the heroic sacrifices of our forefathers! And thus will the children of the future owe their liberties, privileges, and peace to sacrifices nobly made by our own generation.

Love and sacrifice go hand in hand—the one involves

the other. But if love involves sacrifice, sacrifice is glorified by love. There is a glow that attaches to suffering nobly borne for a noble cause.

And let it not be forgotten that no act of unselfish devotion, no sacrifice cheerfully made to a great end, remains unrewarded. How warm with love and rich with promise were the words of Jesus to Peter: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands . . . ; and in the world to come eternal life"!

Mark 10:29, 30

Most of us are not called upon to make heroic or extraordinary sacrifices. However, every true and loyal Christian will know in a thousand ways the challenge of the cross in his life; he therefore also has the opportunity of sharing in the blessed hundredfold.

Luke 9:23

My father's hymn has brought comfort to many bowed down by great sorrow resulting from sacrifice:

There is no gain but by a loss;
We cannot save but by the cross;
The corn of wheat, to multiply,
Must fall into the ground and die:
O should a soul alone remain
When it a hundredfold can gain?

Wherever you ripe fields behold,
Waving to God their sheaves of gold,
Be sure some corn of wheat has died;
Some saintly soul been crucified;
Someone has suffered, wept, and prayed,
And fought hell's legions undismayed.[17]

[17] Arthur Sydney Booth-Clibborn.

The Potter fashioned the cup
With whirling wheel and hand;
Hour by hour he built it up
To the form that his thought had planned.
'T was broken, and broken again,
Marred by a flaw, a crack, a stain,
Marred, so he made it again—and again;
Shaped it from laughter and labor and pain,
From hopes that withered and hopes fulfilled,
From dreams forgotten and longings stilled;
From rose and thorn and the gold of morn,
From dark and bright and the stars of night,
From joy and beauty and all delight;
From flower and weed, from root and seed,
From bird and river and tossing tree;
From wind and fire and heart's desire,
The pearl and the shell and the foam o' the sea;
From the years that were and the years to be;
And the cup that he fashioned he gave to me.
And the clay is thine—O Potter—thine;
But the cup of life thou hast made is mine
To save or lose, to waste or use,
For a poison drink or a draught divine;
To hold it lightly and fling it away,
Or give it for service every day;
To leave it an empty and useless thing
Or fill with the glory of ministering
The word of cheer and the kindly deed
For passing pilgrim or childish need,
The tender thought by suffering taught,
With comfort and healing and power fraught,
To lift and strengthen and help and bless
The souls in sorrow and loneliness;
The loving touch that means so much,

The smile and the look of sympathy;
With these shall I fill this gift to me,
Fill to the brim and running o'er,
And into the world its treasure pour,
Yet, giving, ever shall have the more.
And through the nights and through the days
I drink to his praise—to the Potter's praise—
Who gave the cup to me.[18]

—*Annie Johnson Flint.*

[18] Reprinted by permission of the copyrighters, Evangelical Publishers, Toronto, Canada.

11

DISCIPLINE

Human nature left to itself is impetuous, passionate, willful, and rebellious. Man needs discipline, sometimes long and severe, before his soul comes into maturity, before it is integrated, stabilized, purified, and ennobled. One of the benefits of suffering, when allowed to fulfill its ministry, is that it subjects the soul to many kinds of discipline.

There is the discipline of experience. It means much to share with the mourners of the world the experience of sitting beside a bed of suffering, holding dearly loved hands in one's own (sweet though cruel hours), and also to share with heroes everywhere the experience of seeing without flinching the shattering of hopes and joys, and of weathering through, perhaps with broken heart but with unbowed head, the worst tests of human endurance! Who would exchange these things, with all their pain, for foolish and empty pleasure? Experience such as this gives one a new understanding of the meaning of life and of love: it mellows and subdues; it imparts wisdom and understanding; it spiritually develops, and educates more rapidly and thoroughly than can anything else.

The discipline of helplessness. How cruelly hard it is not to be able to do anything to ward off threatening danger or to alleviate the sufferings of loved ones! How gladly would we place our bodies between those dear to us and death! But we cannot. We have to take our hands off and leave the beloved and ourselves to God. We are thus made to realize our limitations and absolute dependence, and are humbled, learning to "let go and let God." Thus we develop strength and calm.

The discipline of disappointment. Disappointment is of all human experiences the hardest to bear. We live in the future. Our plans, our hopes, our cherished dreams, all these are fuel to the fire of happiness, and when they fail of fulfillment the glow seems to have departed from our lives. However, disappointment makes us realize that we are not the masters of our destinies— Another has his governing hand on the rudder of our ship of life. Disappointment relaxes the tenacity of self-will, makes us gentler, more submissive to the will of God, and more dependent on him.

The discipline of regrets. What mistakes we make —mistakes that we would give a great deal to undo! Regrets form a great part of our sufferings. Such regrets, if we brood over them, can do us infinite harm. They become a type of self-inflicted punishment which is both fruitless and destructive. Nothing is more futile, for regrets cannot change the past; they cannot restore to us the beloved dead; nor can they, if we have failed or sinned, make atonement. When indulged, regrets only cause us to add to them by blinding us to the needs of those about us. Thus do we multiply future regrets *ad infinitum*. However, even regrets when acknowledged without bitterness and resentment, may

teach us humility, less self-assurance, and greater dependence upon God: this is their discipline. Sorrow for wrongdoing drives us to our knees in true repentance, and we rise cleansed and forgiven, purer, wiser, and stronger to face the future. Thus we leave the dross in experience and only treasure the gold. Do not mistake remorse for repentance. Judas experienced remorse and hanged himself; Peter repented with bitter tears and was forgiven, afterward becoming a mighty apostle. Remorse spells death; repentance, fuller life.

The various disciplines of life should be accepted by the Christian as from the hand of God. Thus will they become to him the insignia of his filial relationship, for "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. . . . But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The apostle also reasons thus: "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? for they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; *but he for our profit.*"

Hebrews 12:7-10

"Peace! Be still!
All thy murmuring words are vain—
God will make the riddle plain.
Wait his word and bear his will—
Peace! Be still!

"Hold thou still!
Though the good Physician's knife
Seems to touch thy very life,
Death alone he means to kill—
Hold thou still!"

He knows them all—the hopes, the fears,
Confided not to mortal ears.
He knows the deep intensity
Of feelings, wakened now in me.
And if he knows them, 't is enough!
I need not fear a stern rebuff;
There's sympathy within his breast,
On which my weary heart can rest.[19]

—*Frances Ridley Havergal.*

[19] From *Poems*, by Frances Ridley Havergal. Used by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., publishers.

12

HE KNOWS

"Thou knowest all things," exclaimed Peter, on that wonderful morning of miraculous experience on the shores of the Galilean lake. If we do not know the "why" of our sorrows, we have the comfort of knowing that *He does*. And we are given the assurance that his thoughts concerning us are "thoughts of peace"—let that word "peace" sink as a healing balm into your weary, pain-stricken heart! Also, we have the promise that one day we also *shall know*. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Can we not trust him? Love that does not trust is not love. True love never doubts the beloved but believes even in spite of unfavorable circumstances or seeming contradictions.

John 21:17

Jeremiah 29:11

John 13:7

I often think of these words of Tennyson's in "The Charge of the Light Brigade":

"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."

Sometimes it is indeed like entering death for us to

go on when our hearts seem already buried under the sod. But we are called to "endure hardness" as good soldiers. Simple trust, manifested in obedience even at the cost of heart's blood, is the noblest evidence of our love for God and our trust in him. We must go on—live and do and serve—in spite of feelings, and hereafter we shall know the reason for all the suffering and tears.

II Timothy 2:3

What a hush that word "hereafter" breathes upon our spirits! Because you do not now know, broken-hearted one—because now your sorrow seems a bewildering maze caused by circumstance, accident, chance, perhaps neglect, carelessness, and even ill will—this does not mean that you will never know or understand the true meaning of it all. "Let patience have her perfect work." "Hereafter" means rest after the storm. "Hereafter" means the answer to every question. "Hereafter" means peace and joy. "Hereafter" means Christ and your loved one.

James 1:4

I verily believe that when the clouds have rolled away and we bask in the radiant sunshine of that hereafter, we shall thank God more for the sorrows and crosses of our lives than for the joys, for then shall we know even as we are known, and we shall realize the truth of the words, "He hath done all things well."

I Corinthians 13:12

Not yet thou knowest what I do,
O feeble child of earth,
Whose life is but to angel view
The morning of thy birth!
The smallest leaf, the simplest flower,
The wild bee's honey cell,
Have lessons of My love and power
Too hard for thee to spell.

Not yet thou knowest how I bid
  Each passing hour entwine
Its grief or joy, its hope or fear,
  In one great love design;
Nor how I lead thee through the night,
  By many a various way,
Still upward to unclouded light,
  And onward to the day.

Yes, walk by faith and not by sight,
  Fast clinging to my hand;
Content to feel my love and might,
  Not yet to understand.
A little while thy course pursue
  Till grace to glory grow;
Then what I am, and what I do,
  Hereafter thou shalt know.[20]

[20] From *Poems*, by Frances Ridley Havergal. Used by permission of E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., publishers.

I know not, but God knows:
O blessed rest from fear!
All our unfolding days
To him are plain and clear.
Each anxious, puzzled "Why?"
From doubt or dread that grows,
Finds answer in this thought:
I know not, but he knows.

—*Author Unknown.*

We are quite sure
That He will give them back—
Bright, pure, and beautiful;
We know he will but keep
Our own and his until we fall asleep;
We know he does not mean
To break the strands reaching between
The here and there.
He does not mean—though heaven be fair—
To change the spirits entering there;
That they forget
The eyes upraised and wet,
The lips too still for prayer,
The mute despair.
He will not take
The spirits which he gave, and make
The glorified so new
That they are lost to me and you.
I do believe
They will receive
Us, you and me, and be so glad
To meet us, that when most I would grow sad,
I just begin to think about the gladness,
And the day
When they shall tell us all about the way
That they have learned to go—
Heaven's pathways show.
My lost, my own, and I
Shall have so much to see together by and by,
I do believe that just the same sweet face,
But glorified, is waiting in the place
Where we shall meet, if only I
Am counted worthy in that by and by.
I do believe that God will give a sweet surprise
To tear-stained, saddened eyes,
And that his heaven will be

Most glad, most tided through with joy
For you and me,
As we have suffered most.
God never made
Spirit for spirit, answering shade for shade,
And placed them side by side—
So wrought in one, though separate, mystified,
And meant to break
The quivering threads between.
When we shall wake,
I am quite sure we will be very glad
That for a little while we were so sad.[21]

—*George Klingle.*

[21] Used by permission of Frederick A. Stokes Company, Inc., publishers.

13

RESURRECTION

Christ in himself is life. Through his resurrection he "abolished death, and . . . brought life and immortality to light." To be with him is, therefore, to be forever delivered from death and its accompaniments—sin, disease, and sorrow. When Martha was mourning over the death of her brother, our Lord proclaimed to her his victory in the triumphant words: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." In his resurrection *Christ slew death* for the Christian, taking from it both its sting and its victory. The risen Christ is the most conclusive evidence of immortality. He lived again after having gone through the experience most awful to man, that of death, and he says to us, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

II Timothy 1:10

John 11:25, 26

John 14:19

We have in Christ an irrefutable evidence, not only of immortality, but also of the reality and glory of the resurrection. He arose from the dead with the same body that went into the grave, and yet it was a different body: sufficiently the same to be immediately recognized by his disciples and to allow his taking bread and

fish and eating them in their presence, and yet sufficiently different to enter a room when the doors and windows were closed, and, in defiance of the law of gravitation, to ascend into heaven in full view of them all. The promise given us in God's Word is that our resurrection shall be like unto that of Christ, in that our spirits shall be clothed upon with spiritual bodies sufficiently like our physical bodies to permit of recognition and yet sufficiently like the resurrection body of our Lord to overcome the laws of time and space.

When speaking of the resurrection of the body, the Apostle Paul gives us the illustration of the seed. The seed of the harvest is not the same seed that was sown and yet it is the same in likeness. Thus God gives to the immortal spirit "a body as it hath pleased him," but this resurrection body which God gives is like the body that died: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The Apostle John beautifully expresses this thought thus: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." What a hope! Our loved ones shall be their own dear selves, but transformed and glorified. To their own beauty of soul, of face and form, shall be added the likeness of Christ—his resurrection glory! They shall live with his life. Because he overcame death and was clothed with a resurrection body, their spirits "shall not be found

I Corinthians 15:38

I Corinthians 15:42-44, 49

I John 3:2

naked" but be "clothed upon." Because he appeared to those who loved him, our eyes shall once more be gladdened by the sight of those we love. Because no attribute of our Lord's was lost by the experience of death—no characteristic, grace, or charm, these after his resurrection being rather enhanced and glorified—we shall find that for our dear ones also death has been "gain," and our hearts shall be delighted once more with all that we loved in them, unspeakably enriched by the coming of immortality. So enviable is this experience, so much better is it for us than our present bondage to corruption, that the Apostle Paul says: "We groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. . . . Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

II Corinthians 5:2-4

We shall see our loved ones again, even as Jesus was seen many times and recognized, though wrapped in glory; we shall see them and know them and rejoice in their new-found beauty, which transcends in glory the beauty of the stars, and we shall enjoy them with Christ forever.

"On high
A record lives of thine identity!
Thou shalt not lose one charm of lip or eye;
The hues and liquid lights shall wait for thee,
And the fair tissues whereso'er they be.
So shall that beauty its old rights maintain,
And thy sweet spirit own these eyes again."

Marvel of marvels, if I myself shall behold
With mine own eyes my King in his city of gold;
Where the least of lambs is spotless white in the fold,
Where the least and last of saints in spotless white is stoled,
Where the dimmest head beyond a moon is aureoled.

—*Christina Georgina Rossetti.*

I have but thee, my Father! Let thy Spirit
Be with me then, to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm, I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through thy abounding grace—
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place;

Some humble door among thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
The river of thy peace.[22]

—*John Greenleaf Whittier.*

[22] From "At Last." Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers.

14

HEAVEN

We are given many beautiful descriptions of heaven in the Bible. When comforting the dying thief, our Lord said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." *Luke 23:43* The word "paradise" is derived from a Greek word which means "park" or "garden." It is, therefore, suggestive of the loveliness of Eden, with its wealth of vegetation, its gorgeous flowers, and the childlike innocence of its inhabitants. How sweet to think of meeting our loved ones in so fair a place and of enjoying heavenly companionships in shady and fragrant bowers!

John the Evangelist speaks of heaven as a city—the "new Jerusalem"—with its high walls of jasper, its twelve gates of pearl, its river bright as crystal, its wealth of precious stones and pure gold, flooded with the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb. A city is suggestive of a vast and cosmopolitan concourse of people. In his vision John saw this multitude, "which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," dwelling in love—held together by that love "which is the bond of perfectness." *Revelation 21:2* *Revelation 7:9* *Colossians 3:14*

Sweeter still is the picture of heaven given us in the terms of home. Who can tell us so perfectly what

John 3:13 heaven is like as the only One "that came down from heaven, even the Son of man"? Jesus' words have more weight with us than those of any others, and he speaks *John 14:2* of heaven as his "Father's house," his Father's home. Home is suggestive of love and peace, of sweet fellowship and shelter, of all that makes for happiness. Most of all it is suggestive of the presence of loved ones.

A garden, a city, a home—best of all, a home, our Father's home! This is heaven.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." After all, the whole of this great and wonderful universe is in a sense our Father's house, our Father's home. Isaiah tells us that heaven is God's throne and earth his footstool. Somewhere in the infinite depths of *Psalm 139:9* space are those fair mansions prepared for us. Though we "take the wings of the morning," we cannot go beyond his love and care. Death to the Christian is but the passing from one part of the Father's house into another, the crossing of a threshold into a bigger, brighter room.

No, not cold beneath the grasses,
  Not close-walled within the tomb;
Rather, in our Father's mansion,
  Living, in another room.

Living, like the man who loves me,
  Like my child with cheeks abloom,
Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,
  Busy, in another room.

Nearer than my son whom fortune
  Beckons where the strange lands loom;
Just behind the hanging curtain,
  Serving, in another room.

Shall I doubt my Father's mercy?
Shall I think of death as doom,
Or the stepping o'er the threshold
To a bigger, brighter room?

Shall I blame my Father's wisdom?
Shall I sit enswathed in gloom,
When I know my loves are happy,
Waiting in another room?[23]

However, sweetest of all thoughts of heaven—the one that brings most rest and joy to the heart—is expressed in the words of the Apostle Paul: "To be with Christ . . . which is far better." "Whilst we are at home in the body," reasons the apostle, "we are absent from the Lord"; therefore, "we are . . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." "To be present with the Lord," to look on his face and to enjoy his love and fellowship, this is, indeed "far better." It holds for the Christian all that the heart can desire. Jesus promised us this felicity when he said: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Let us think of our dear departed ones as being at home with Christ in his loving, tender care, enjoying his companionship.

Philippians 1:23
II Corinthians 5:6-8

John 14:2, 3

All that heaven means of beauty and joy, light and life, comfort and peace, resolves itself for the true Christian into the one word "Christ." Heaven is Christ, and Christ is heaven. He is our Best Beloved, our Rose

[23] Robert Freeman. From *1000 Quotable Poems*. Used by permission of Willett, Clark & Company, publishers.

of Sharon, our Lily of the Valley, our Bright and Morning Star. Were we to have the golden streets, the walls of jasper, and the river of crystal—were we to have all the beauties of paradise, and not have Christ, heaven would not be heaven. Christ has, in himself, abolished the supreme enemies of human happiness—sin, sorrow, death—and "in him" and "with him" God has freely given us all that we need for our eternal beatitude.

O Lord Christ, whom having not seen I love and desire to love,
O Lord Christ, who lookest on me uncomely, yet still thy dove,
Take me to thee in Paradise, thine own made fair;
For whatever else I know, this thing is so: thou art there.[24]

[24] Christina Georgina Rossetti.

Jesus, thy love and light I long to know;
Draw near in this dark night of loss and woe:
My wounded spirit fears pain's long duress;
Eyes blinded by my tears dread sightlessness.

Rebellion's fierce onslaught thy voice can still;
The void within me nought but thou canst fill:
There is no peace, no rest, apart from thee;
E'en joys by thee unblest bring pain to me.

There comes a wave of deep and strong desire
That o'er my soul doth sweep and I aspire
To pure, abiding joy, to perfect love—
To peace without alloy, gift from above.

Come, heal my wounded heart, thou gentle Friend;
Bid all my fears depart, my anguish end:
Only when thou dost dwell within my breast,
My longing dost thou quell, and give me rest.

—V. *B. D.*

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